**Notes on SAG contribution to Africa Rising in Tanzania 10-14 September 2014**

Some SAG members participated in the Africa Rising Learning and Monitoring and Evaluation Events held in Arusha in November 2014. In addition, the majority of SAG members participated in a field trip to Babati District, to visit project farmers in Seloto and Sabilo villages.

**Reflections on the field trip to Babati District 12 September 2014.**

* Even though only two households were visited (seemingly contrasting strongly in available resources) the SAG felt strongly that the innovation platform approach being followed was more like a research co-ordination committee. Co-ordination committees have the potential to improve integration, particular amongst the technical project partners, and thus preventing over-burdening households with too many research activities, but the team might consider exploring how the innovation platforms could be specifically strengthened to be of benefit to the different farmer typologies.
* It should be noted that the current research design, in which participants test technologies with project support for one year after which they must make a decision to adopt (and bear appropriate costs) doesn’t take account of year-to-year variations in environmental factors. Evidence from elsewhere suggests that farmers continue ‘testing’ new things for several years in order to sample a range of environmental conditions.
* An efficient technology (one that works in a technical sense) is not necessarily the same as an attractive technology (one that gives a reasonable net benefit to rural households for an acceptable level of cost and risk). Promotion of technologies needs to be accompanied by appropriate risk- and benefit: cost profiles so that farmers can make informed decisions regarding adoption.
* The SAG felt that project managers might take additional account of changing population densities and its impact on intensification opportunities.
* For longer-term sustainability, there is a need to think more about capacity- and institutional development and their importance in the context of partnerships. A lack of capacity to address gender issues is particularly important.
* The SAG discussed what was the added value of Africa RISING – what’s new? Integration at various levels (technological, institutional, etc.) is the core concept. There has been considerable emphasis on farm typologies and the SAG was keen to see such typologies put to good use. The project should perhaps be more explicit in explaining how this would be done.
* Both farms visited exhibited very complex intra- and inter-household relationships. It was felt strongly that better understanding of household dynamics would pay dividends for the adoption/scaling process.
* Because of the necessarily decentralised nature of project implementation, often by quite junior staff, there might be few opportunities for meaningful engagement with senior policy officials. Project management might reflect on mechanisms for better communication in this regard.

**Minutes of SAG meeting 13 September 2014**

The meeting began with a brief discussion concerning the core remit of SAG and the following was agreed: ‘To ensure that the research is rigorous, robust and relevant, to help ensure that the strength of evidence from the research is appropriate to underpin decision-making’.

***Strengthening partnerships***

The project management team had asked the SAG to identify some principles for effective partnerships. After some discussion, the following were proposed for further consideration:

* Recognising the interests of individual partners while contributing to the platform/programme goals. Partners have their own motives (and rewards) for participating, and effective collaboration will depend on recognising and accommodating disparate sub-goals.
* With regard to the above, leveraging additional resources (human and financial) for partners to support sustainable intensification will increase partner engagement and ownership.
* There needs to be an appropriate balance between trust and accountability and between formal and informal agreements, including in relation to the selection of partners.
* Effective, transparent communication between partners.
* There needs to be good alignment of programme objectives with priorities of national/regional partners. That will facilitate the adoption of common goals.

***General***

The group noted that Innovation Platform membership should take into account the need to strengthen the capacity for entrepreneurial activities associated with the programme’s products e.g. milk, cowpeas, vegetables, etc.

There was a brief discussion of indicators of Sustainable Intensification in advance of a separate meeting to identify practical, measurable indicators. The group noted that generally environmental sustainability is the first type of sustainability that comes to mind but it is just as important that households should be seen to continue to gain more value in terms of income, nutrition and food security. A third class of indicators should measure the degree and persistence of institutional capacity built.

The SAG was joined by Africa RISING senior management for joint discussions. In response to some concerns raised by the SAG, it was noted that there was need for cross-programme coordination and that IFPRI was seen as the ‘glue’ that held the three projects together because they were collecting and holding the data from baseline surveys that were implemented in a common fashion. However, IFPRI had not been able to maintain continuity of staff working on the ground with local research teams, resulting in some delays. Despite the value of using common approaches in the three programmes, there was some tension between addressing local issues and the need for standardisation and common themes. The programme in Ethiopia, however, reported a significant degree of cross-learning within the country. The group was assured that capacity development was seen as a high priority for the programme and that more than half of all funding goes to national partners.

The SAG was assured that they would be able to have some input into influencing the form and content of a possible second phase of the programme.

***Review of West Africa AR***

The SAG were given a preview of the recent external review of the Africa RISING West Africa project. A summary presentation was made later to the general AR meeting and will be reported elsewhere as part of the record of that meeting. The full report will be submitted to IITA and the SAG expects to be sent it formally, together with the IITA response.